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N THIS ISSUE:

FONTEM, CAMEROONS – THE AFRICAN PERMANENT MARIAPOLIS

Story of a small city, center of life, joy and generosity – its beginnings, its incredible development

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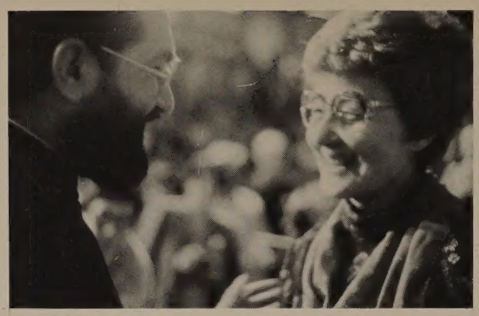

2 *THE WILL OF GOD IN THE FOCOLARE MOVEMENT: We are continuing here the publication of a series of talks given by Chiara Lubich on the "Will of God." "We understood that to love God with all our heart, soul and strength, we had to do his will with all our heart, soul and strength."*

5 *FONTEM: This issue our feature articl is dedicated to a special coverage of hou the Focolare Movement arrived in Afri ca, and the life of the permanent Maria polis that today exists there.*

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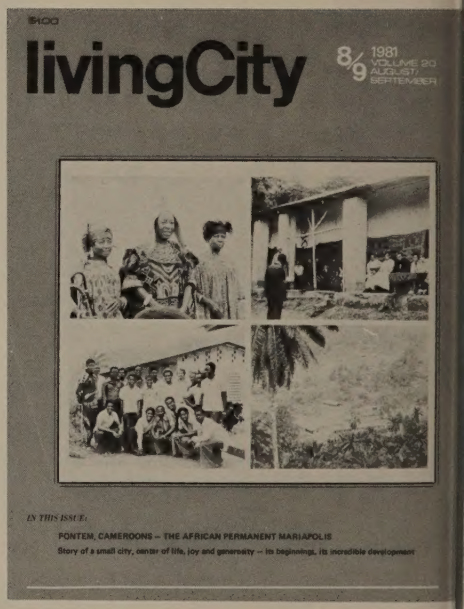
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COVER: Fontem yesterday and today. Pe ple and sites making up the permanent Mar polis of Fontem.

We would like to call our readers attentio to the fact that this issue of *Living City* for August and September. The next nu ber will be coming to you in October, 198

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A SCHOOL FOR PROGRESS: The need for a secondary school had been felt for some time. Now, through years of cooperative effort, there is a high school capable of accommodating 200 students.

17 *HOSPITAL OF HOPE: The Bangwa people and the focolarini set to work immediately at solving the serious health problems of Fontem. Today a hospital with many modern facilities has been built.*

18 *TOWARD THE "ONE CHALICE": An ecumenical gathering between Catholics and Orthodox was held at the Mariapolis Center of Rocca di Papa last May. A highlight of this gathering was the participation at the general audience with Pope John Paul II who greeted the group warmly.*

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The will of God in the spirituality of the Focolare Movement

by CHIARA LUBICH

In previous issues of Living City, *we printed the talks of Chiara Lubich on humanity's "yes" to God as it is proposed to us in the Old and the New Testaments. Here she begins to consider how this "yes" to God came to light in the early experiences of the life of the Focolare Movement. This talk was presented on the occasion of the ecumenical meeting between Catholics and Orthodox, sponsored by* Centro Uno, *the ecumenical center of the Focolare Movement.*

We must be truly thankful to God for the many insights he has given us with regard to this very important aspect of Christian life, particularly at the beginning of our Movement, when he made use of providential circumstances to enlighten us, and suggested simple and effective examples that helped us to understand and do his will.

So that this wealth of experience may become the patrimony of each member of the Movement, I think it is appropriate for us to look back at the early days of the Movement, for I am reminded of the words of Scripture: "Recall the former days . . . after you were enlightened . . ." (Heb. 10:32).

We had chosen God, who had manifested himself for what he is: Love. And we asked ourselves, "How can we love God with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our strength?" Then we remembered the words of Scripture, "Not every one who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father" (Mt. 7:21). So we understood that to love God with all our heart, all our soul, all our strength, we had to do his will with all our heart, all our soul, all our strength.

It was clear, therefore, that loving God was not a matter of experiencing some particular sentiment, but of doing his will. To do his will became the practical way of showing our love for him.

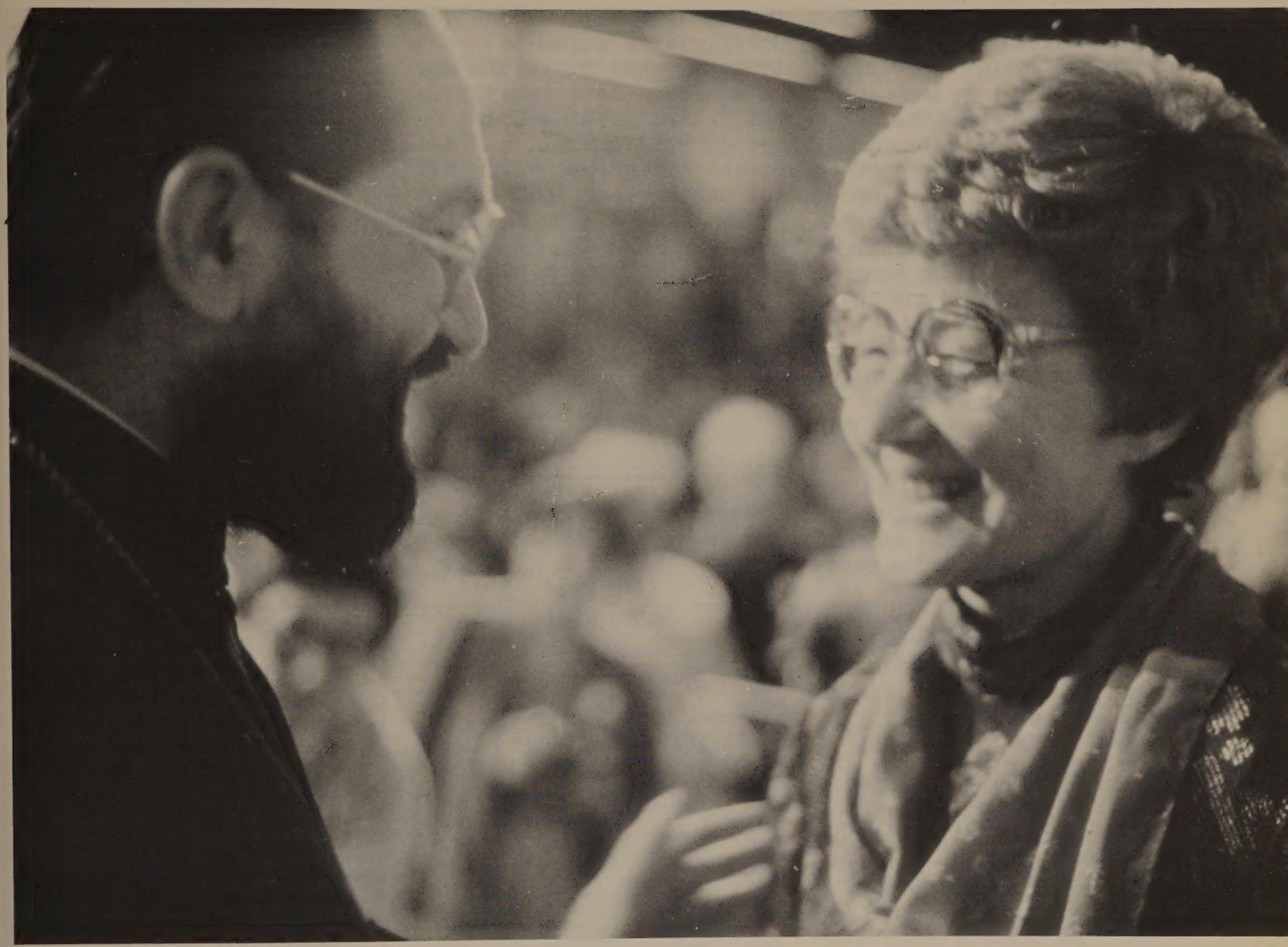
We realized that we possessed a great gift — our free will — and that nothing could be more reasonable for us human beings, children of God, than to freely put our freedom at the service of the One who had given it to us. Thus from that moment on, we resolved to do not our own will, but God's will.

We immediately sought to unite our will to his. Our only will now was to do his will. In this way we would be truly loving him.

At about that same time — I do not remember whether before or after — an experience of mine helped us to understand something very important In December of 1943, God had called me to consecrate myself to him with a vow of chastity. Then, during midnight Mass on Christmas of the same year, I felt in my heart that Jesus was asking me to give him *everything.* By "everything" I naturally understood what most poeple in my situation would have understood at that time: that in addition to the vow of chastity, I should give God my own will through the vow of obedience and all that could be considered mine through the vow of poverty, and that I should leave my family and the beautiful things of the world by entering a cloister — the strictest form of cloister. I said "yes" to God, although I wept and was in torment because of something rebelling within me.

The next day I went to my confessor, and since he knew of the life that was springing up around me — I had already been joined by my first companions — he said very decisively, "No. This is not God's will for you."

At that moment, two ideas which in my mind had previously coincided, became distinct: the so-called *state* of perfection, and perfection. I understood then that although undoubtedly there were states of life that were more or less perfect, *perfection* could be attained only by doing God's will.



After giving her talk on "The Will of God in the Spirituality of the Focolare Movement" during the ecumenical meeting between Catholics and Orthodox, Chiara Lubich speaks for a moment with Greek-Orthodox Bishop Gennadios from Crete.

I remember that until that moment I felt as if a high wall were blocking my way to holiness. And I had been trying to find a breach in that wall. I used to think: if it is a matter of doing penance, then we should wear hair shirts all day long and scourge ourselves till we bleed. Or if it is a matter of praying, we should pray all day long. . . . But the question still remained: "What must we do to become saints?" I simply did not know. It was principally through this experience I just mentioned, that God enlightened me, and I understood that to reach sanctity it is enough to do his will.

It was a wonderful discovery! And so practical too. Here was a way that was good for everyone: men and women, young and old, gifted and less gifted, intellectuals and laborers, mothers and those in religious life, lay people and clergy, government officials and ordinary citizens. Here was a way to sanctity wide-open to every human being. I felt I had in my hands the passport to perfection — not only for an elite group of persons called to the priesthood or religious life, but for the masses.

I saw that two roads lie before us in life, and that my friends and I, like everyone else, would have to choose between them: we could spend this life either following our own will, or following God's will.

If we followed our own will, our destiny would be like that of almost everyone else in the world. Each day many people die, and the tears and flowers show that their death causes much suffering. But then, after another generation has passed, most of them have been forgotten.

If, instead, we walked the way of God's will, he would guide us moment by moment along paths conceived by his love, invented by his imagination, and suggested by his providence, which cares for each of us as individuals and for the community as a whole. He would lead us on a marvelous, divine adventure, as yet unknown to us. And our lives would not end in silence, but would remain to give light to many, like the lives of the saints.

We were so convinced that choosing God's will was the good, worthwhile, beautiful, beneficial thing to do, that we were struck by what we considered the strange way of reasoning of so many people who limit themselves to being resigned to God's will. We used to say: "What? . . . *Resign* ourselves to God's will? On the contrary! We should have to resign ourselves if we do our own dull will, so unprofitable and inconclusive!" We should *want* to do God's will because it is the greatest thing we could desire. And we should not say, "I *must* do God's will," but rather, "I *can* do God's will!"

Seen in this perspective, all our personal plans fell into insignificance and we abandoned ourselves completely to God.

We knew that God's will was a Father's will. We could place ourselves in his hands without fear. Certainly, anything that he willed would be for our good.

We believed in love.

This complete trust in God did not mean we became passive. Quite the contrary: once we had grasped God's will, we made it our own and carried it out with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our strength, endeavoring to be as faithful to it as possible even though it was constantly changing.

When we did not know what God wanted, we did what we thought best, asking God to put us back on the right track if we had made the wrong choice.

Before long, we had acquired a considerable amount of the flexibility one must have in order to be able to understand his will.

We knew that by living this way we were putting into effect a divine plan, about which we knew nothing except that we were being guided by God, our Father, and that every circumstance was an expression of his love for us.

Living like this, we were struck by many passages of Scripture. Jesus had said, "My food is to do the will of him who sent me" (Jn. 4:34), and we wanted to be able to say the same. He had also said, "I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me" (Jn. 6:38). "Nevertheless not my will, but yours, be done" (Lk. 22:42). "I always do what is pleasing to him" (Jn. 8:29). "I have come to do your will, O God" (Heb. 10:7).

Jesus was our example. We imitated him, not in an exterior way — as, for example, in his scourging or in going without a traveling bag — but in the fact that, like him, we wanted to do God's will. This is reflected in the following passage from a meditation I wrote in 1946.

I felt I had in my hands the passport to perfection — not only for an elite group of persons, but for the masses.

"Each of us must aim at being another Jesus as soon as possible; we must act as Jesus here on earth. . . .

We must put our human nature at God's disposal so that he can use it to make his beloved Son live again in us.

In order to do this we should do only God's will, as Jesus did.

May we always be able to have on our lips the words Jesus used in reference to himself. . . .

When we have succeeded in being able to be like Christ in his determined, total obedience to the Father, then we will experience inner unity."

We viewed the saints from the same perspective. We were not to imitate them mindlessly copying their actions, but by striving to do God's will as they had done.

How different they all were from one another; yet they were identical in one thing: they all had done God's will.

At that time our whole purpose in life was summed up in doing God's will. For example, being consecrated to God with vows was something important, but God's will was more important.

I remember that I considered my sister who was called to married life to be just as fortunate as I. I felt we were truly equal. I said to her: "You are getting married, and you are doing God's will. I will live a life of virginity. But we are equal because what is important is God's will."

To do God's will was the norm that bound us together as one family with Jesus our brother and God our Father.

We found God's will expressed for us above all in the new spirituality that was coming to life. We had chosen to live for God alone, and had understood that in order to be faithful to this choice, we had to put into practice the commandment that Jesus calls his own: the "new commandment" (Jn. 13:34; 15:12).

This commandment influenced everything we did. To carry it out as well as possible, we made a pact. And we recognized that even our love for Jesus forsaken — that is, for Jesus in the moment of his greatest suffering when he cried out, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Mt. 27:46) — was an integral part of being faithful to this commandment. Moreover, it was living this command that brought about the unity willed by Jesus and enabled us to have him present in our midst. And the desire to live this command well gave us added incentive to live all the other words of the Gospel.

God had focused our attention on the new commandment, and now we realize more and more that in so doing he had revealed to us the very heart of Christianity. ●

FONTEM

The African Permanent Mariapolis. The story of a small city that has become a center of life, joy and generosity — its beginnings, its incredible development.

Compiled by PIERO PASOLINI

A partial view of Fontem. This little city is situated in the wooded hills of the West Cameroons.

We are publishing here an article that Piero Pasolini had prepared for us. Articles by Pasolini, physicist and writer have appeared frequently in our magazine. Before leaving for Africa where he died, he had told us that the article about the Movement in that continent would be ready for April.

Piero certainly wasted no time. While traveling from one city to another, fulfilling the main purpose of his trip, that of updating the members of the Movement and coordinating the activities of the centers there, he managed to jot down the first part of his article, the part about Fontem. Piero must have had a great love for Africa, a continent to which he had gone often to give a hand to the focolarini of Fontem. In fact, his pages seem to have been written in one flow, without any changes or corrections.

At the moment of his death, Piero had only begun the second part of his article, which could be called "Post-Fontem." In this part he was to write about the subsequent spreading of the Movement throughout Africa. We hope to publish more on this topic at another time.

THE PERMANENT MARIAPOLIS IN AFRICA

Fontem is located in the midst of rough, wooded hills in the heart of the West Cameroons, about 200 miles from the west coast of Africa. In early 1966, a team of doctors, nurses, teachers and civil engineers of the Focolare Movement arrived there. They had come following an urgent request. For years, the Bangwa people, a somewhat isolated tribe, had been imploring Bishop Peeters to send someone who could help them solve some extremely serious problems of health, housing and development. Quite some time before, a group of missionaries from Mil Hill had opened one of their missions 20 miles from Fontem, a mission accessible only by foot. They had generously extended themselves to the limit of their strength; they had even rebuilt the trail between Fontem and the nearest city.

In the meantime, Bishop Peeters had come to know the Focolare Movement during a meeting with Chiara Lubich in Rome, and immediately asked for a focolare center to be established among the Bangwa people. In this way he hoped not only to bring them help, but also to initiate an experience in which the Christian spirit of the Movement and the authentic values of this mostly non-christian tribe would come into a very profound contact. He greatly admired these people for thier capacity for hard work and for their strong will power. He thought that the Focolare Movement could build a small model city there, similar to the one he had seen in Italy, at Loppiano.[1]

Chiara Lubich visited Fontem for the first time in 1966, soon after the arrival of the first team of focolarini. She gave them the guidelines for carrying out their future work in Fontem. These pictures depict two moments of her meeting with the Fon and the people of Fontem. (Above) The Fon surrounded by relatives and dignitaries. (Below) Chiara listens to a homage given her in the name of the Bangwa people.

The arrival of the focolarini,[2] therefore, was greeted with great joy by the Bangwa. The team set to work immediately, after having found housing in the native huts in which the Bangwa lived. It had been difficult to reach this isolated region, especially to travel the last forty mile stretch of the trail which was in very bad condition. Yet, Chiara soon afterwards decided to go there herself. Her meeting with the "Fon", the head of the tribe, and the tribe itself, was a memorable occasion. They came out in large numbers to greet her.

The Fon, an animist and a deeply religious man, commented to Chiara, "If you have been able to bring your Movement to do all this, then God is certainly with you. He will be the one to work with you for my people as well. . . ." Chiara recalls that she felt as though she had been in the presence of a patriarch.

Two years went by and the focolarini team of doctors, nurses and technicians, together with the help of the local people, worked hard at improving the health conditions. The first two wings of the hospital, the first buildings of the high school, and even a small hydro-electric plant and a mill to extract oil from the fruit of the palm trees were built. A priest of the Movement was in residence, even though there was not yet a parish at Fontem. The most serious diseases, especially among the children, were radically reduced; about 100 to 150 patients were treated everyday.

In early 1969 Chiara returned to Fontem to inaugurate the second wing of the hospital. The crowd that gathered to welcome her was even bigger than the first time. There were two bishops, missionaries from other parts of the Cameroon, political figures from the central government, and of course, the Fon with all the chiefs of the region. During the Mass, celebrated in a large clearing

THAT FIRST EVENING, FIFTEEN YEARS AGO

Native huts, fabricated from baked mud and straw. Here is where the first team of focolarini lived.

Night was falling. After an adventurous trip by Land-Rover over a thirty mile stretch of trail that was practically impassable, (with dizzying descents and arduous climbs, amid pot holes and stones) Frank, Victor, Dominik, Florian, Benedict and I came to a crossroad. And suddenly we knew we had arrived. To our left, we saw the long huts of the grammar school, in front of us a sports field dug out of the hill, a little higher up, a small church built of mud bricks, and scattered all around, a few mud houses. Those had to be the homes of the school teachers and the catechist. It was getting dark now and it was difficult to make out the surrounding landscape.

As we were trying to decide which way to turn, we saw a light moving on the slope of the hill. After a few minutes we noticed Mathias Anu, the catechist, arriving with his oil lamp. He welcomed us warmly, and accompanied us along a narrow path, to a little house. It belonged to a family of teachers who had moved out to make it available to us. We were exhausted, but couldn't avoid greeting the little crowd of neighbors gathered around us. Having waited for us for quite some time, they were happy that we had finally arrived.

Thus began the Fontem experience of a few of us focolarini on the night of February 6, 1966. Since then fifteen years have passed. Thinking back now two or three things come to my mind.

The first thing is that what helped us go ahead in all these years was the will to live and to help others live. This made us experience the joy of loving and of seeing that love is the answer to everything. And it gave us the courage to overcome all the difficulties. The second thing is that having tried to constantly direct our actions to the service of others, we discovered so many resources within ourselves. There were physical, intellectual and spiritual talents that were so unknown to us to make me say that the most unthought of capacities and talents manifest themselves when we direct our efforts toward serving our neighbors.

Also, what the ideal of unity has revealed to us is that the love you have for others helps them to be open with you. Love generates love and causes both our neighbor and us to manifest our very best qualities respectively.

Because we loved and respected the African people, their richness revealed itself to us, and we discovered the many values which they possess. L.D.

to accommodate the more than 3000 people who were present, the bishops pointed out the significance of that event. It marked the beginning of an experiment. He described it as the experiment of a group of people of different backgrounds and traditions, who live together and are united in the effort of helping one another discover God's plan for their future progress and development.

Addressing those present, Chiara said, "We might ask ourselves how all this has come about and why this place has become a center of life, joy and generosity. I think it is because we have started to live together Jesus' great commandment: 'Love one another as I have loved you.' I can envision a great 'city' springing up on these very grounds, a city that will become famous throughout the world, not for material wealth, but for the light which is going to shine forth from it and enlighten everyone: a light that will be sought by all. It is the light that comes from mutual love kept alive in the name of God. Many people will want to come here, to this very place, that once was dominated by the jungle. They will come in order to learn how to love, how to change the world, how to fight disease, and how to bring about peace."

After Chiara's departure, the focolarini continued their work with even greater commitment. This commitment involved being careful not to impose their own, at times, unnecessary structures on this people so richly endowed with unique values of religion, tradition and culture. They wanted to allow them to have a pure encounter with the Church and its genuine life which springs from the Gospel — the same life which the Movement strives to revive, and which makes the Movement "Church." The evangelization which would necessarily take place would be that of living the Christian ideal; it would express itself through life. And this sense of life is what is deeply rooted in the African soul.

In this way a true unity will be achieved among all, leaving untouched the natural values of the

The sick are brought to Fontem for treatment even from far away places. Any means is used for passing through the jungle.

people, in this way the people could maintain their own characteristics, while being called upon to transcend themselves and to allow themselves to be purified through unity.

On her return to Italy, Chiara entrusted to the Gen[3] the task of collecting the funds needed to carry ahead the work begun in Fontem. "Operation Africa" thus began all over Europe and in many other parts of the world — with the consequent growth and development of Fontem. A new maternity ward was added to the hospital; the high school was provided with new classrooms, laboratories, a cafeteria, dormitories for both boys and girls, with accommodations for 200 students.

A great health problem, sleeping sickness, which had severely plagued the Fontem area, was overcome through a two year campaign. The local government furnished tents and pesticides. Local teams, headed by members of the Movement, combed the area both to search for and to treat those afflicted with this illness; they sought to eliminate the carrier of the disease, the tse-tse fly, by spraying the banks of the rivers. Now the incidence of this disease has been reduced to a tolerable level, and no fatal cases have been reported for a long time.

At a certain point, the Bangwa people expressed a new desire: they wanted to have a church big enough to hold the large numbers of people who had become Christian and the non-Christians as well. Fontem was now considered a parish, with a priest of the Movement whom the bishop had assigned as pastor. Encouraged by the Fon himself, the people began a campaign for pledges to help, at least in part, toward the expenses of the Church. With the help of many European parishes as well, the church was eventually completed in 1975 and its inauguration took place the same year. It was an impressive celebration attended by the entire population. With its beautiful architectural lines in harmony with the surrounding African landscape, the church now stands high on top of a hill, dominating a newly populated section of this little city which sprang up so quickly that it seems to have risen as if by magic.

Now Fontem is a small, budding city with its own church — its town hall, its regional government offices, its post office, warehouses for the coffee cooperative, and many, many new homes scattered along the slope — from the top of the hill all the way down to the little valley. On the other side of the large stream, the buildings which actually make up the "Permanent Mariapolis" of Fontem are located: the hospital, small factories, the men and women Focolare Centers and the houses for the young people who go there from all parts of Africa for a certain period of time in order to deepen their understanding of the spirituality of the Movement. On the other slope we find the school buildings and many other homes.

The Fon (second from the right) prays in church during the Thanksgiving Sunday celebration.

As Chiara had foreseen in 1969, Fontem has now become, through its life, a point of reference which is at the service of all Africa. The spreading of its life is proportional to the unity which exists between the focolarini who live there and the people for whom the Mariapolis exists.

One may wonder what providential design led the members of the Movement to engage in this experience among a people in a jungle of Africa, instead of in a populated African city. The answer is obvious when one follows the events: for the purpose of coming into the closest contact possible with the culture and philosophy of an African people still relatively untouched by the trends of thought prevalent in the rest of the world. This experience then, is immersed in the context of a genuine African society. At the same time, it serves to support the making of new contacts in other parts of Africa. In fact, even though there are notable cultural differences among the various African nations, they still have in

THANKSGIVING CELEBRATION

Today is the Bangwa Thanksgiving Sunday, a holiday which has been celebrated for only ten years in this tribe. The story of the beginnings of this holiday starts when the Cameroons had won their independence. At that time the Bangwa people asked themselves: "What will become of us, now that we are independent? Many other tribes have learned and important persons to represent them and help them; those tribes will thus be able to take care of their own interests and we shall be abandoned . . . ."

So they decided to choose God as their protector, and began to pray to him. Then came the intervention of Bishop Peeters and the arrival of the focolarini. Now this feast is celebrated in thanksgiving to God for having answered their prayers.

Many people have worked to make today's feast beautiful. Although it has been raining for the last few days, now the sun is shining. This morning a seemingly unending flow of people, Christians as well as non-Christians, headed towards the church for Mass. It was a beautiful ceremony in which we recalled all our suffering of the past and how God had answered everyone's prayers.

At the end of the Mass the Fon came forward to address the people saying, "Today we must thank God for the church, the hospital, the school, for so many other things — for the happiness of this day . . . . As we have just heard in the Gospel reading, what is the most important is the Church, is God. We must all make an effort to open up our hearts. This is real progress. . . ."

The celebration then continued with popular games, songs, dances and a raffle held in the square outside the church.

At the end a hugh crowd accompanied me down the hill to the hospital as I took Communion to the sick, with whom everybody wished to share the joy of this beautiful day lived in unity.

common a fundamental way of viewing things; this way of viewing life is imbedded in the depth of the African soul even where it seems that the pressure of Western culture has destroyed it.

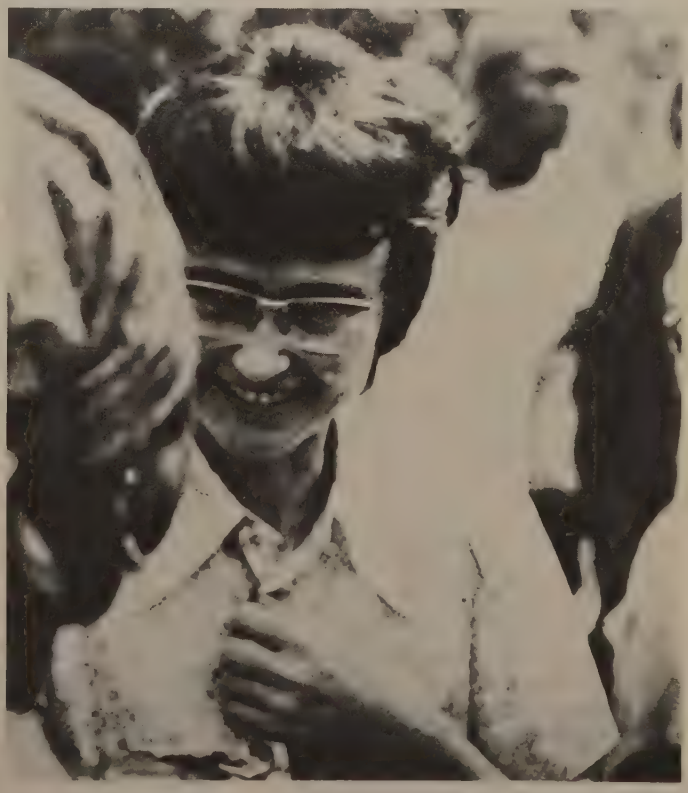
It is through this special spiritual atmosphere of unity that the Mariapolis of Fontem carries out its mission.

There is a continuous flow of visitors — bishops, priests, nuns, families, young people — coming to Fontem from every corner of Africa and other parts of the world. Some stay for a few days, while others stay for weeks, months, and even years; but all who come, leave with the imprint of an unforgettable experience in their hearts. Parting words like the following are often heard¾ "Now I have the problem of trying to describe and share with others this indefinable experience. It is so divine, yet at the same time so human." These were the words of a priest who was giving retreats to African missionaries. He had reached Fontem after having overcome incredible traveling difficulties, to stay only two days. For the most part, this is the experience of all who visit Fontem. They leave with the determination in their hearts to share this experience with those around them, and many, of all ages and positions, have done just that. Numerous bishops have asked if some activities could be organized in their dioceses. Other people leave with the firm intention of starting groups of the Movement in their own areas.

Thus this Christian spirit, as it is lived in Fontem, has spread to many other African countries and centers of the Focolare Movement have been opened in a few of them. They are in Douala and Bamenda in the Cameroons, in Man on the Ivory Coast, in Nairobi in Kenya, in Gitenga in Burundi, in Masaka in Uganda, and in Cala in Transkei. In many other places, scattered throughout forty seven different African nations, the spirituality of the Focolare Movement is lived by groups supported by priests or lay people who keep in close touch with Fontem.

Also this project, however, as all projects where God is at work, has been tested by trials. A few years ago a difficulty arose in Fontem which touched the very foundation upon which everything was based. A crisis of unity developed between the members of the Mariapolis and the population of Fontem. It was a "period of darkness" during which everyone asked: "Why? How could this have happened? What did we do wrong?"

When the supernatural is engrafted into the normal life of a society, which is naturally subject



Miss Marilen Holzhauser and Dr. Lucio Dal Soglio (on the left), directors of the Focolare Movement in Africa.

Above: The Fon with two members of his family, all dressed in their colorful traditional costumes. Below: Every time a mother leaves the hospital with her baby, she is escorted home by a group of relatives and friends who express their joy at the arrival of a new life by dancing.

to various outside interests and numerous influences, there exists an extremely fragile and delicate balance which can all too easily be upset. This is true especially when certain external influences take advantage of the inevitable errors and imperfections that exist in any relationship and attack the most vulnerable people. That is exactly what happened. External elements, stimulated a monetary interest in some people, who set themselves against the Movement. Soon it seemed as if the whole population had become cold and distant. Only later it became clear that it was not really so. The members of the Movement felt as if they had become aliens, and as if their life there had lost its meaning. Everything that had been done in those years appeared to have born no fruits. The atmosphere of unity that had existed seemed to have been completely destroyed.

It was the moment for a deep examination of conscience for the members of the Movement there. They questioned the purity of their motives asking themselves if inadvertently they had nourished the subtle interest to win the people over to their own ideas, if they had created structures which were in tune with the Western world but not with the nature of the people, if they had had unconsciously a subtle attitude of superiority. Had their love been totally unselfish? Were the local people asking themselves the same question? The members of the Movement wondered if maybe the legacy received from Chiara in 1969 had been somewhat betrayed. She had said, in fact, "The Christian ideal that we should live here and propose to all has to be the life of the Gospel, and nothing else. It must not be disfigured by any element that is not that of the Church, and all structures should be reduced to the essential. This ideal has to engraft itself naturally and vitally into African values."

There was only one thing to do. After having tried to clear up all misunderstandings, to correct what could be corrected, it was necessary to love twice as much and work at overcoming every obstacle.

And little by little the situation began to improve and finally it changed completely. The schemes of those who wanted to take advantage of the situation came to light; the people of Fontem understood onec more they had been and were truly loved. It became clear that the majority had suffered greatly, even though sometimes in silence, for what had been happening. Many said: "It was the devil who wanted to ruin God's work and lead us astray . . . ."

Now that the relationship has been fully restored, it is stronger than ever and is pumping new spiritual and moral life into the Christian community and is involving Christian and non-Christians alike. No one thinks any longer that someone intends to change their customs. On the contrary, many things that happened since and are still happening prove that particular importance is given to these traditions which implicitly and explicitly contain many values. Mathias, a catechist from Belleh, declared: "The hospital, the school and everything else are wonderful things, but the greatest thing that you have given us is this life, this new life that you have given us."

This moment of trial has proved to be of extreme importance in penetrating the African reality, and in understanding the essential value of the experience which is taking place in Fontem. □

1) A small city built by the Focolare Movement near Florence, Italy. It embodies a concrete expression of a society founded on the Gospel. Its inhabitants live according to the spirituality of the Focolare Movement.
2) See inside back cover.
3) Gen stands for "New Generation" the young generations of the Focolare Movement.

MARTIN NKAFU

by LUCIO DAL SOGLIO

In 1969, when Chiara came to inaugurate the hospital, Martin Nkafu was still only a little boy. He used to come, though, every day to help the focolarini work on the many projects under construction.

Throughout Chiara's three-day stay in Fontem, Martin inconspicuously followed her around almost everywhere. Her last morning there, Chiara attended Mass with the focolarini in a room of the newly inaugurated hospital. The events of the previous few days had forged a very deep unity among all of us. At one point I looked up and saw Martin standing in the rear, observing everything intently. Chiara who had recognized him from the previous days, saw him outside and invited him in. After Mass Chiara said good-bye to each one of us; when she got to Martin, she shook his hand, saying, "Good-bye, Martin, you will be the first Bangwa focolarino!" Now, more than ten years later, this has become a reality.

Recently Martin had a very important experience that had its roots in the traditions of his people. Moreover, it took place during that crisis mentioned in the previous article. This experience can shed light on some of the reasons for that crisis.

The Bangwa society conserves with a just pride its many traditions, common to many African tribes; the sense of solidarity, respect for and submission to the traditional authority figure of the clan, and a sharing among members of the same clan are very strongly felt among them. Several years ago, without forcing the situation, but instead, combining love and decisiveness, Martin succeeded in convincing his clan (which was led by his elderly father) to let him follow the ideal of life of the Focolare Movement, even though his father had already selected him to be his successor.

In order to spend three years at the school of formation in Loppiano, Martin went to Italy, where he received the news of his father's death, and an account of the events which preceded it. Sensing that the end of his life was near, the elderly head of the clan had called the family together and had patiently listened to each one. Some of them were Presbyterian and some were Catholic; each would have liked the father to be baptized in his respective faith. After each one had spoken, the father stated, "I love you all, but I want to be baptized in Martin's faith." He then took care of all the arrangements for what would have to be done by the clan after his death, and named Martin to be his successor. He even expressed his wishes regarding his funeral. At the end he sent for the parish priest, who baptized him and administered the other sacraments; then he died.

Funerals have a fundamental importance in the Bangwa society because the dead continue to be part of the community of the living and are in reality the continuity of the clan's bonds with the ancestors, who are the guardians of tradition as well as intermediaries between God and the living. Since the head of the family plays this extremely important role, he has the final word in everything.

Martin suffered greatly for being so far away at the time of his father's death. He wanted to be faithful to the call he had felt to live his Christian ideal by consecrating himself to God as a focolarino, "leaving father, mother. . ." as the Gospel says. At the same time, however, he was acutely aware that now as head of the family, he was needed at Fontem where relatives were expecting the word that only he could give to solve the various family problems. Without him, they were like orphans.

Martin Nkafu, dressed as chief.

At that time, circumstances were such that he could not leave Loppiano immediately; however, it was possible to postpone the ceremonies connected with his father's death until he could be in Fontem. His relatives, though, believed that he had run away forever to escape his family duties. We, who were in Fontem at that time, suffered deeply because of the situation and felt that we were blamed for having violated their traditions by sending Martin away and thus bringing down the curse of the ancestors upon the family. Nothing any of us said convinced them otherwise.

Finally Martin arrived in Fontem one evening. Their joy at seeing him matched the intensity of their previous disbeliefs. Immediately Martin was faced with the problem of reconciling the fact that he was the head of his natural family and at the same time, a focolarino, thus belonging to the spiritual family of the Focolare Movement. The solution was very clear to us: the focolarini would stand by him, helping him to take on the responsibility for the clan

that his father had left in his care. This is how it was carried out, in accordance with all the Bangwa traditions. Martin returned home where according to ritual, he slept on the bare floor, ate the prescribed foods, and wore the clothes which only he as successor could wear. He had long meetings with the "Fon" and the other chiefs of his clan. Martin also took care of all the problems and the needs of his relatives, even making arrangements for his mother to be looked after in the best possible way.

Every day he went to the focolare so that all he did was in harmony also with this "other" family which he had chosen and of which he was a part. It might seem impossible to live an evangelical detachment from one's own relatives and yet at the same time remain so involved in their affairs. Martin felt that God was giving him a special grace, though, to do just this. Each word that he spoke to his family in answer to their needs solved one or another problem. It really seemed that God was acting through him as he carried out his traditional duties.

His father had left the request that a house with a sheet-metal roof be immediately constructed for his mother, even before the funeral. So Martin, his brothers, the focolarini, and the Gen of Fontem divided the work among them. Some gathered the blocks of dried earth, while others raised the walls; some searched through the forest for the wood needed to make the roof, while still others went around the different markets looking for the sheet metal. All of us felt ourselves part of Martin's family.

Some focolarine together with a group of African Gen girls in front of one of the residences.

On the day of the postponed funeral, all of Martin's relatives were present along with many, many other people. Everyone was happy, not only because Martin was there, but also because there were present the men and women of the Focolare, the Gen and the parish priest who celebrated the Mass on the square in front of the house. This was followed by dances, speeches, and the rituals of installation of the family hierarchy. Everyone admitted quite frankly that at first none of them had believed that Martin would come back, but they had seen with their own eyes that it was possible to be a focolarino and still belong to the tribe.

Afterwards, Martin appointed one of his brothers to represent him in the day-to-day affairs of the family, and so everyone was peaceful when he left. On his way back to Italy Martin stopped by Buea to greet the Bishop to whom he related the outcome of all the events of these days. The bishop, bowing to acknowledge Martin's authority, told him, "You did well to accept your position and to preserve the tradition. Now your word will mean much to your people. Through you tribal hierarchy and tradition will be elevated to God; they will become, so to say, divinized. We are children of tradition, and we must carry it with us to Paradise."

A group of Gen boys at Fontem. Young people come here from all over Africa to spend weeks, months, or even years for an experience of living the Gospel.

This experience and many similar ones of recent days have helped us to grasp something of the "true" origins of that misunderstanding of the past; they have caused us to probe more deeply into the values of this people.

The significance which Martin's experience has for the future of the Movement in Africa is in perfect harmony with these words of Pope John Paul II, on May 10, 1980, at Yamoussoukro, on the Ivory Coast, "Preserve carefully your African roots. Safeguard the values of your culture. You know them and are proud of them: respect for life, family solidarity and support for relatives, respect for the old, the sense of hospitality, judicious preservation of the traditions, the taste for feasts and symbols, attachment to dialogue and palaver to settle differences. All this is a real treasure from which you can and must draw something new for the building up of your country, on an original and typically African modes. . . . On this precise plane, remain very vigilant, with regard to models of society which are based on the selfish pursuit of individual happiness and on the god of money, or on the class struggle and violent means. All materialism is a source of degradation for man and of enslavement of social life."* □

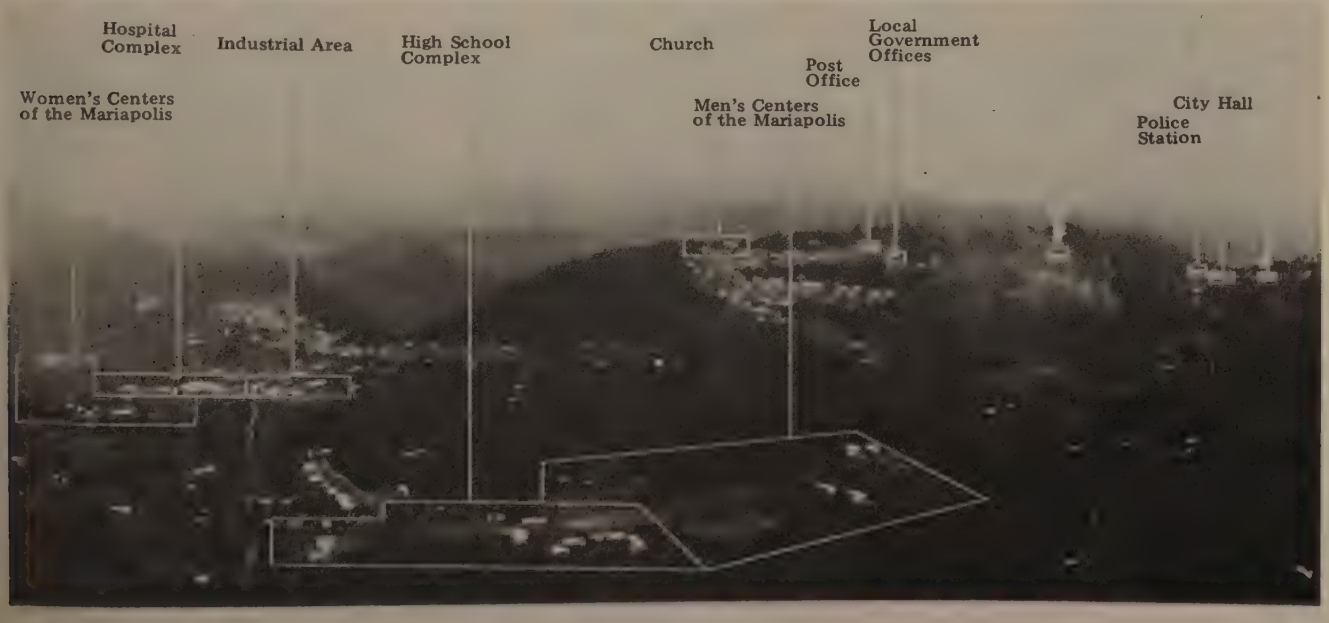
**Excerpt taken from* L'Osservatore Romano, *June 9, 1980, p.14.*

A SCHOOL FOR PROGRESS

From the very beginning of our stay at Fontem, we saw the need for establishing a secondary school. The people felt that it was essential for at least some of their young people to be able to pursue their studies beyond elementary school without interruption or the need to move to faraway cities. First, we began by converting the mud huts which had housed the old elementary school; shortly afterwards we began building new cement buildings on a large tract of land which the people had given us. Now this new secondary school has ten new buildings. One contains classrooms; others contain dormitories, cafeteria, offices, chapel, faculty residences and recreational facilities. The school can accommodate 200 students, of whom two thirds are boys and one third are girls, during their five years of secondary schooling. With an additional two years of studies their students can then enter university.

The kind of commitment a school like this requires is truly remarkable. The teachers must think of providing everything for the children. The parents who accompany their children here tell us, "Now they are your children." Our greatest concern is that of keeping a good moral and spiritual atmosphere among the students. Here, too the young people are subjected to all kinds of influences which come from outside, and from time to time various difficulties arise; however, it has always been possible to overcome them by trying to live the Christian ideal. This school has shown itself to be not only an institution of civic and cultural formation (ranked among the leading schools of the Cameroons), but also a school of moral and spiritual formation. We try to transmit this spirit through what we teach, but above all, through individual and group contacts. The fundamental idea, taken very seriously, is to foster mutual love.

Also here in the school we have seen that the Word of Life (a phrase of the Gospel put into practice monthly by members of the Focolare Movement throughout the world) which is referred to as "the motto" is a powerful



means of evangelization. There are innumerable little experiences showing changes in mentality and conduct as a result of this. During the year we have various social events that lend themselves to a deepening of mutual love. "Friendship Day" is one of these. On this day teachers, other personnel and students get together without regard to rank to talk openly about any problems they may have. The students themselves prepare skits that tell something about their life. Every time we have one of these days, we see progress in our relations with one another.

The "motto" of life continues to have a deep effect on our everyday life. One hears experiences like this one: "When I thought of the 'motto,' 'He had loved his own in in this world, and would show his love for them to the end.' (John 13:1), I felt that I was filled with a new spirit, completely different from what I, myself, had. From that moment on I tried to love everyone, but I wondered how it could be possible to love everyone in the world. Then a new thought came to me: if you love the one who is next to you, you are loving the whole world. And this is the new spirit that I now have within me."

Another says, "What has helped me the most is the commandment, 'love one another. . . .' This motto made me change my way of acting. I was selfish and I thought only of my own interests. Now I think more about the others and try to share what I can with my friends."

Almost all of our former students ask to continue receiving the commentary on the "motto."

This excerpt from a letter written by a former student who was forced to leave because of serious misconduct, is very revealing: "I want to thank you for all that you did for me while I was at your school. It can happen that a person finds himself among friends who lead him astray. Now I know what your school was for me. Your good wishes and your prayers are still helping me. I realize that I should have accepted what you were telling me and I'm glad I understand this now. Thank you for the copies of the "motto" that you continue to send me; they help me a lot. There are many circumstances in life which would be overlooked if there weren't something like the Word of Life to point out their importance."

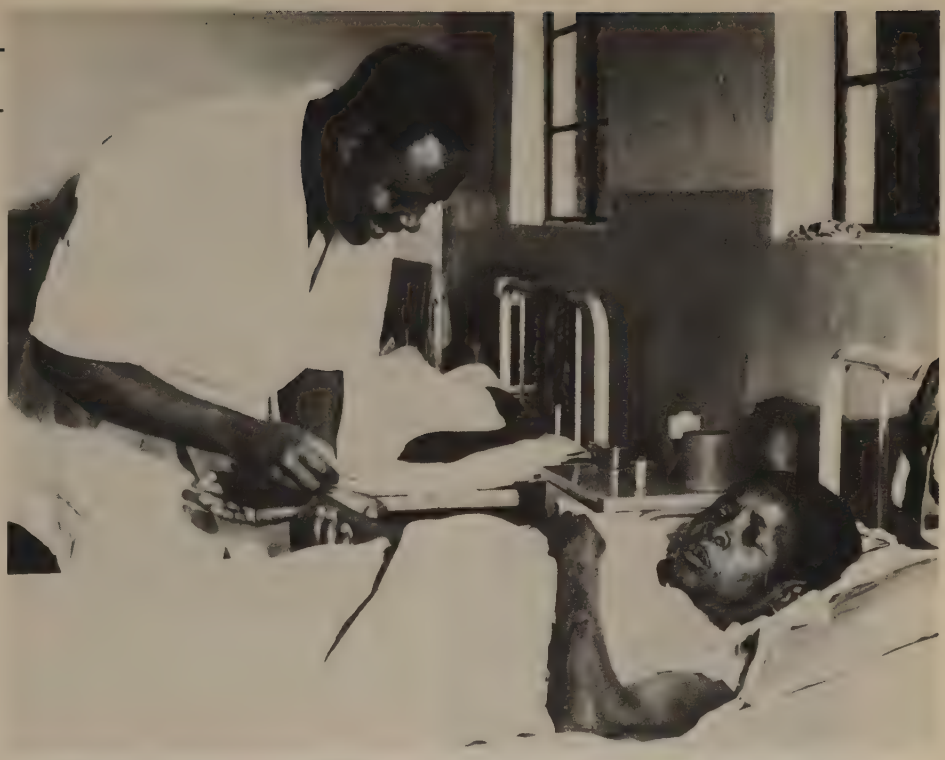
Above: A group of families. They meet regularly to share their problems, learn more about the Church and help one another in building a community based on the Word of Life. During these gatherings the husbands help out with the domestic chores (something unthought of in Africa), and the relationship between young and old is simple and spontaneous. Below: Some high school students dressed for a celebration.

The parents are involved too. During our last Parents' Day program (attended by 300) many understood from the beautiful atmosphere found here why their children are so different. Some asked us to send them the commentary on the Word of Life. Despite the fact that many Bangwa families live in distant cities, they want to send their children here to school.

Another important occasion is Baptismal Day. Each year fifteen to twenty students receive baptism. It is not merely a ceremony for them. "I have seen that my friends who have been baptized are truly changed; they seem new. I was baptized as a child and I didn't realize what a transformation baptism brings about. I saw how these friends not only spoke, but also lived according to the Gospel. So I felt prompted to live better as a Christian."

Many of our students go on to the university and often reach high positions. Many write us that they are trying to hold on to the spirit that captured them here and to continue living it. "I decided to put myself in God's hands so that he may work in me and use me as an instrument to call many to him. I will let him be my guide. . . ." □

A HOSPITAL OF HOPE



A true family spirit exists among the workers and with the patients in the hospital. Statistics from last year revealed: 34,000 outpatients, 1300 admissions, 870 births and 190 operations performed.

"Now I can say that at least once in my life I have seen a hospital in which the doctors, nurses and patients are smiling." This is what one missionary said after having visited the hospital in Fontem.

At the beginning this hospital was the one grace which the Bangwa people most desired from God; it was the tangible proof to them that lives can be saved. After God, life is for them the fundamental value. Even the "Fon" spent a great deal of time there in critical condition. His full recovery drew a great deal of attention.

The hospital has been fully operative for about twelve years now. In the course of these years a real family atmosphere had been created among the personnel, patients, and relatives, (Christians and non-Christians alike). It is common to hear groups praying, asking for the recovery of a seriously ill patient, or to find a small crowd of patients, relatives and nurses reciting the rosary around the death bed of another, in order to accompany him as he takes this last step. The patients talk about God with ease and see his love also in their illnesses, thus helping one another to carry their crosses.

John, who was fifteen years old and seriously ill with no hope of survival, asked to be baptized. He was very much distressed before receiving the Sacrament, but afterwards he calmed down immediately. After a few days he recovered. Now he works in the parish.

Suffering from an abdominal tumor, David, twelve years old, was taken to the hospital at the point of death. He could have died from one moment to the next; instead he lived another two months. During that time David, who would smile all the time, became everyone's friend. He knew that he was going to die and spoke openly about the new life that awaited him. "I want to offer my life for young people who don't know God," he would say. One day he felt that his time had come. He asked to receive the sacraments and called the nurses and those nearby to pray with him. Then with a great smile he died. Perhaps at no other time had there been such a deep spiritual atmosphere in the hospital. Before taking his body away his mother said, "Don't cry. David is in heaven."

In Fontem there are many occasions for celebrations: Christmas, Easter, a marriage, an unexpected recovery . . . Mass is celebrated, and then there are songs, prayers, refreshments, and conversations, in which God spontaneously takes the first place. The non-Christians participate too and it is hard to distinguish them from the others.

A few years ago a new custom had been started. When a mother leaves the maternity ward, her relatives, friends and acquaintances, all dressed up come to pick her up. All together then they accompany mother and child home, dancing all the while and singing traditional songs. It is a scene that is repeated almost every day, a custom which may have arisen spontaneously from the atmosphere of love experienced during the mother's stay at the hospital, and which leads everyone to share in the joy over the arrival of a new life. It is engrafted into the African tradition which already gives great value to the birth of a new life. Parents often say, "It is better to be poor with many children than to have a lot of money and few children. . ."

If life is greeted with such joy, death is viewed with serenity. Speaking with many elderly people, one gets the impression that they have lived for the moment of their death, which is viewed as the most valuable act in their life. When people feel that they are going to die, they often ask the doctor to tell them the truth. They want to prepare themselves well and make sure that there is peace among the relatives and acquaintances. Then they call everyone in order to communicate to all that which is the best part of themselves and to share the most beautiful thing they have learned in their life. ●

ON THE WAY TOWARD THE "ONE CHALICE"

Compiled by ORESTE PALIOTTI

This year the theme chosen for our regular get together with our Orthodox brethren was most opportune one: "Our yes to God." The acceptance of His will, seen primarily as a commitment toward the realization of the unity of the entire human race, which is, exactly the supreme will of God. It was exponded from various perspectives and points of view in talks by Metropolitan Damaskinos from Tranoupolis, Bishop Gennadios from Crete and the Coptic Bishop Bimen from Mallaway, Egypt, while Chiara Lubich illustrated it in the light of the spirituality of the Focolare Movement.

The days of the meeting, between May 4 and 9, were intense, constructive, filled with a varied program. It included among other things a tour of Rome's sites which recall the earliest centuries of Christianity, a Wednesday audience with the Pope, and finally, a trip to Loppiano. The visit to this international model mini-city of the Focolare Movement was highlighted by a warm welcome by Archbishop Giuliano Agresti, President of the Italian Bishops' commission for Ecumenism.

The meeting offered the opportunity for a cordial exchange of information, of spirituality, and of experiences among the participants who had come from Egypt, Lebanon, Jerusalem, Greece, Cyprus, Istanbul, France, Germany, England, Italy, and Switzerland. There were ecumenists, theologians and young students belonging to different ecumenical groups. Those present included Catholic Church authorities (of Maronite rites as well) and Orthodox and Coptic ones (representatives of both the Orthodox and Armenian Patriarchates of Constantinople, of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem, of the Orthodox Church in Greece and in Cyprus and the Orthodox Churches of Romania and Serbia).

As Bishop Torrella, Vice President of the Secretariat for the Promotion of Christian Unity, pointed out, this coming together in a spirit of unity is the most efficient way to foster it and move it from a theological plane accessible to only a few to an area of life, accessible to all.

In everyone present, I could detect the same joy for this experience, the same hope that the "one chalice," the great dream of Patriarch Athenagoras, would one day be a reality. Panayiotis Loizides, a musician from Cyprus who speaks five languages in addition to his native Greek, told us, deeply moved, that he had learned still another language — the language of "eyes which look at others with love."
Joseph Chehade a Coptic from Lebanon, having gone through the horrors of war, had come to a new discovery of God and his Church. He had this to say: "I want to re-discover the beauty of the rich, orthodox tradition and of our Saints. . . . I think that by better knowing the church we belong to, the better we can find the way to unity among churches. . . ."

There was Irina Findlow, orthodox, of Russian origin, and widow of the director of the first Anglican Center in Rome, Canon John Findlow. She and her husband have dedicated their entire life to the cause of unity. "For me the Church is already one," she told me. The prayer and the hope that this unity may be fully reached prevailed over the entire convention.

METROPOLITAN DAMASKINOS

Metropolitan Damaskinos from Tranoupolis, representing the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople, Demetrios I, gave a report on the Will of God today. In a letter to Chiara Lubich, Patriarch Demetrios I had sent his benediction for the gathering. After his talk, Metropolitan Damaskinos invited Chiara Lubich to speak at the Orthodox Center of Chambesy, Switzerland, where his is the director.

"Meeting at the foot of the Cross"

"Divided Christianity," Metropolitan Damaskinos said in his talk, "as it lives the tragedy of separation today and yearns to put an end to it, is particularly called upon this year, which marks the 1600th anniversary of the Second Ecumenical Council of Constantinople, to explore in depth the Creed of that Council, which is the basis of the ecumenical dialogue for the reestablishing of unity.

"This appeal and invitation is addressed above all to those churches considering themselves to be the exclusive heirs of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church. These churches should seek (if and as far as possible) to reach beyond their own canonical frontiers with which they identify the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, and acknowledge as Church in the full meaning of the word, the churches with whom they will be called to share the Eucharistic Communion. For Eucharistic Communion (which is the expression and the crowning of the ideal of full communion) is impossible where there is disagreement on the essentials of faith, and where the fundamental order of the Church, namely the apostolic succession, which is the continuity of the apostolic structure of the ancient original church, has been lacerated.

"These two points cannot be separated from one another. Thus, continuing an intense bilateral dialogue." He added: "May the theology of Cyril of Alexandria, 'One incarnate nature of the Divine Word'[1] impregnate our efforts towards unity. May his humility and his sense of responsibility serve us as example: 'And did not St. Cyril of Alexandria in 433 agree to give up his very beautiful theology in order to make peace with John of Antioch, once he was sure that aside from different expressions, their faith was identical?' "[2]

The Metropolitan continued, "So let us, united by mutual love, return to our common roots, to the Creed of Nicea-Constantinople, not in a static, but in a dynamic way, in order to seek, find and reexamine our identities in relation to the world of today, of today's ecumenical reality, and the concrete 'here and now.' Let us enrich our ecumenism 'in space' with an ecumenism'in time,' with what has been believed always, everywhere, and by everyone.

"Christianity, we must confess, is painfully divided. But things that are divided cannot be sufficient unto themselves; they cannot explain themselves, as Arnold Toynbee had stated rather erroneously. 'The main error of Toynbee's point of view,' — as recorded by Father Georges Florovsky — 'lies in the fact that he simply ignores the tragedy of Christian division. East and West are not independent entities and therefore cannot be understood each on its own.'[3] They are fragments of *one* world and *one* Christianity which, in the design of God's plan, should not be separated. The tragedy of division is the greatest and the pivotal problem of the history of Christianity. The effort to look at the history of Christianity as a comprehensive whole, is already, in a sense, a step toward a healing of that broken unity. The fact that separated Christians are realizing that they belong to one another and should therefore stay together, is a very significant result of the ecumenical dialogue to date. The next task is to understand that all Christians have a 'common history,' that all of us have had a common history, a common origin. . . .

"A few days ago," Metropolitan Damaskinos concluded, "in a private conversation, a very spiritual man, a Hindu, told me that from the point of view of his religion, Christ Crucified was the most powerful truth of Christianity. If the faithful of the various churches and why not of the various religions were to meet to exchange their reflections at the foot of the Cross, maybe they would find a common ground on what is essential for the good and the peace of the world. For only there would they find themselves unshackled from the dialectics of merely human wisdom, from their ambitions, and from their egoism. Christ Crucified, who contains in Himself all of mankind, has been forsaken by all. The universal God-Man died in solitude, the epitome of deprivation and of sacrifice. His abandonment, even by the Father, was perhaps necessary for the achievement of re-unification. He is a Mystery of loneliness, the crucial point for union and for unity."

1) J. Quastrin, "Petrology," Letter 46, no. 2.
2) "The Pope Speaks," vol. 12, 1967, p. 266, Pope Paul VI at the Phanar.
3) "L'Eglise Corps du Christ," Georges Florovsky, p. 124 (own translation).

BISHOP GENNADIOS

Some of the participants in the ecumenical meeting at Rocca di Papa. It is the group from Cyprus. From left to right: Father Guglielmo Rossi, President of the Caritas *in Cyprus, Mr. and Mrs. Melis (she is Catholic, he is Orthodox), Christakis Savides, and the musician Panyiotis Loizdes (known as Mario Conti).*

"Unity, the first problem of every Christian"

Bishop Gennadios from Crete spoke in the plenary session on the will of God in the liturgy of St. John Crysostom, one of the great Fathers of the Eastern Church.

In an interview on the contacts between the two Churches, he told me that the most important event, in his opinion, was no doubt the opening of the theological dialogue agreed upon during the meeting in November 1979 between Pope John Paul II and the Patriarch of Constantinople, Dimitrios I, spiritual leader of the Greek Orthodox Church. The dialogue was inaugurated on the Island of Patmos, which the ecumenical Patriarch and later the Greek Parliament have recently declared sacred, because it was on this island that St. John the Evangelist wrote the Apocalypse. The actual work of this theological dialogue started in Rhodes, on May 29, 1980.

Other important ecumenical events, according to Bishop Gennadios, were the Pope's pronouncement of the Eastern Church's Saints Cyril and Methodius as co-patrons of Europe, and "the celebrations for the 1600th anniversary of the Second Ecumenical Council of Constantinople (It was actually the first of the Councils of Constantinople and the second after the Ecumenical Council held at Nicea), where the last seven articles of the Creed were defined. All Christianity now celebrates this very important event in the life of the Church."

Another important fact is "the Great Holy Synod of the Eastern Orthodox Church, now in preparation, where many problems, which had found no solution for centuries and which need one from the practical and pastoral point of view, will be discussed. Among these are the relationship between the Roman Catholic Church and the other Orthodox Churches, and the relationship among the different local Orthodox Churches."

"I believe," commented the Greek Orthodox Bishops, "that this separation among us Christians is the most serious sin — which today has taken the place of original sin. Jesus Christ had come to save us from original sin by his Cross. But now it is our turn to crucify our selfishness, our passions, and be purified of our weaknesses in order to accomplish this unity.

"Our leaders, (the Pope, the Ecumenical Patriarch, the heads of the other Churches) have given us the example by their encounters which have demolished the barriers of fanaticism and of hatred, and made us discover that we have the same origin, and therefore are brothers. All this, however, must be made known. An event such as the encounter between the Patriarch of Constantinople and the Pope, for instance, should be the topic sermon for our churches.

"Our press should inform the people about this new air being breathed in the Christian world. Instead, quite often, many are not aware of what is going on in the field of ecumenism, and thus do not take part in it. It is therefore our task, as priests, and particularly as bishops, to become apostles of this divine ideal of Christian unity. so that we may pass it on to our people, to our clergy. Only by so doing shall we give valid assistance to the most important efforts of the theologians. Unity must become the first concern of every parish.

BISHOP BIMEN

"Beyond the diversity of cultures"

Other aspects of the ecumenical question were brought out by the Coptic Bishop Bimen in a question and answer session. He said, "The principal purpose of the Church is to gather all into one. Unity is Christ's prayer to the Father. Unity which means unity in faith, in love, and in testimony. Many efforts are being made by the Catholic Church and by the ancient Eastern Churches towards arriving at a single Creed. In my opinion the difficulty does not lie so much in the dogma as in the diversity of cultures. While participating in some conferences in the United States, I often found myself more in agreement with the Roman Catholics than with the Greek Orthodox who were present. Still, the power of love is great enough to lead us to unity. If we, theologians as well as lay people, in our different fields of endeavor, approach our neighbors by learning to love Jesus in them, we will create a ground on which the findings of the theologians can be accepted. In the Orthodox view, in fact, the bishop is not the only authority of the Church — he cannot act by himself — he needs the 'amen' of his congregation.

BISHOP RAMON TORELLA

"Progress in the dialogue between East and West"

Bishop Ramon Torella, Vice President of the Secretariat for the Promotion of Christian Unity, illustrated the principles and guidelines of the Second Vatican Council on ecumenism, and also the work of the Secretariat.

He pointed out that, "one of the principal aims of the Council, as stated in the decree on Ecumenism, 'Unitatis Redintegratio', was the re-establishment of unity among Christians. The other was the renewal the Church needs for a more faithful commitment to Christ and to his gospel. These two goals are convergent and must proceed simultaneously. There can be no true ecumenism without an inner conversion, a sanctity of life, and prayer.

The Coptic Bishop Bimen of Mallawy, Egypt, spoke about the dynamics of the Will of God in Christian life as a means to reach unity within each person and among all persons.

"The Council has greatly emphasized the fact that the ecumenical movement was born and continues to grow by the impulse of the Holy Spirit. We couldn't explain otherwise how, all of a sudden, the dialogue between the Church of Rome and the other Churches was resumed after all these centuries of prejudice and misunderstanding. It was no doubt, the power of the Holy Spirit moving all Christians, the entire people of God, to serve the cause of unity. If they were not animated by the grace of the Holy Spirit all efforts would be inadequate.

"Another very important statement of Vatican II, never before affirmed so explicitly, was that 'all those, justified by faith through Baptism are incorporated into Christ. They, therefore, have the right to be honored by the title of Christians, and are properly regarded as brothers in the Lord, by the sons of the Catholic Church.'[4] And in spite of the still lasting divisions, there is a real, though yet imperfect, communion among them. This principle implies a truly enormous change of mentality; if we are indeed brothers and in a certain way even now already united, it means that we can and must do our best to see that this scandal of our division may disappear forever.

"The first commitment of the Secretariat consists in promoting within the Catholic Church a new attitude toward the ecumenical question," the Bishop explained. And he mentioned a document published by the Secretariat in 1975, "Ecumenical Collaboration at the Regional, National, and Local Levels."[5]

As to the work with the other churches, "There is a fruitful dialogue under way, not only on a so-called bilateral, but even on a multilateral level, with the World Council of Churches. The Catholic Church is not a member of that Council, but constructive relationships are kept through a working commission created in 1965. At present this commission is working on two themes: the common Christian testimony (a document on this was published last year), and Christian cooperation in the social field (religious freedom, human rights, human development, assistance, peace. . . ."

And what about the outlook for the future? Bishop Torella wondered. "We must intensify the dialogue on the themes that are still controversial, encourage the diffusion of the results, foster a greater unity among the teachers of theology, and urge all Christians to pray, as a way to participate in the ecumenical dialogue — because only with prayer can we discover the spiritual dimension of this dialogue. Furthermore, we must seek more and more opportunities to live together and share our common testimony, for this is a truly extraordinary means for advancing the ecumenical movement. And, finally, we believe that we must still further develop the ecumenical formation of Christian people as emphasized in the apostolic exhortation of Pope John

Paul II *Cathechesi Tradendae.* 'Catholics cannot be disassociated from this ecumenical activity since all the faithful, each according to his or her capacity and state in the church, are urged to play their part in this movement towards unity.'[6]"

FATHER PIERRE DUPREY

"Reaching down to the roots of the divergencies"

Father Duprey, who has studied the theme of theological dialogue in depth, feels that, "the Catholic and the Orthodox Church must rediscover that they are sister churches because Pope Paul had said to Patriarch Athenagoras in Jerusalem that we have the same faith, the same sacraments, the same apostolic succession, we live the same Eucharist. In the past we had forgotten this reality, we have allowed one Church to exist in contraposition to the other, but this was not the truth. At Istanbul during his visit to Patriarch Demetrios I, Pope John Paul II said, 'The context had to be created before any joint attempt could be made to renew the texts.'[7] To rebuild the context means to establish a relationship of fraternal charity among us, charity in all the ecclesial dimension of the word." This is the work which has been carried out by the Popes and by the ecumenical Patriarchs of Constantinople from the time of Pope John XXIII to the present.

"Charity is the root, it is the power that must inspire everything," insisted Father Duprey. "But now the moment has come where out of the dialogue of charity, the theological dialogue must blossom forth as well. This we have started at Rhodes, after the work of the preparatory commission had been completed. It was a formidable experience, an experience of encounter, of mutual understanding of one another's ▷

IRINA FINDLOW

"For me the Church is already one"

"I am Orthodox," Irina Findlow said. "I married an Anglican priest, the Canon John Findlow. Between my husband and I there never were any theological problems. My husband loved the Orthodox Church very much, because he knew that the roots of Anglicanism are in Orthodoxy. Later we discovered how much we had in common with the Catholic Church as well.

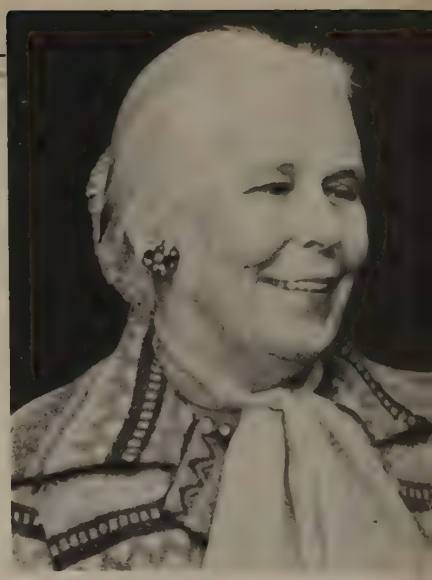
"We lived in Rome for the first time from 1949 to 1956, when John was Chaplain of the English Church and of the British Embassy. Then, again, during the Council, when my husband was the Director of an Ecumenical Center (today the Anglican Center in Rome) to which he gave all his energies.

"After his death, in May 1970, I went back to Rome, and for five years taught Russian at the Gregorian Institute. Since 1975 I've been living in England and working as President of an international ecumenical center in Oxford.

"In my book, *Journey to Unity*, I wrote about my husband, about the historical moments we lived during the Council, about our contacts with many important personalities of the various Churches who appreciated our ecumenical work — Cardinal Bea, Pope Paul VI, Athenagoras. . . .

"One particularly important encounter for us was the one with Chiara Lubich, when she came to London, and my husband introduced her to Archbishop Ramsey. The spirituality also helped me a great deal after the death of my husband. In the difficult moments God always brought the focolarini my way.

"My husband and I have always worked for the unity of the Churches. There is still a long way to go before it becomes reality," said Mrs. Findlow, "but there are prophetic spirits in the different churches working toward it. They are still a minority, it's true, but they do exist, and they are the great strength of the Church. And while it is sad to see how many prejudices must still be overcome, we must go on working, and hoping because Jesus' commandment is 'that all may be one.' For me, the Church is already one."



Mrs. Irina Findlow, Orthodox, Director of an ecumenical center in Oxford. Her husband, the Anglican Canon John Findlow, was the first director of the Anglican Center in Rome. Among the experiences heard at the convention, hers was characterized by her long-time contact with the Focolare Movement.

Bishop Ramon Torrella, Vice-President of the Secretariat for the Promotion of Christian Unity (left), illustrated the task — which those present held to be eminently fruitful — carried out by this organism of the Roman Catholic Church, on its road toward complete unity among Christians. Father Pierre Duprey, Under-Secretary of the Secretariat (right) said, in conclusion to his incisive speech: "Unity is not impossible, because it is necessary."

The chancellor, Msgr. Shnork Kasparian (in the photograph) conveyed to the participants the message of the Armenian Patriarch of Istanbul, Kalustian. The message said, in part, "We assure you that our thoughts and our prayers will be there where the children of God of different nations are gathered in an ecumenical spirit to say their 'yes' to the will of the Heavenly Father."

needs. The working commission was represented, not by theologians, but by fifteen bishops from each side. This was done so that it would not turn out to be a discussion of technicians but rather a meeting of men of the Church who, by their very being together, would recognize each other for what they were — successors of the apostles, witnesses of the same faith in the Resurrected Christ and those responsible for the unity of the Body of Christ.

"Many object: 'the dialogue cannot lead anywhere because you'll be discussing mere words!' Well, we will discuss words in as far as the words have significance in expressing our faith, we want to arrive at the roots of the divergences; we cannot ignore either the historical or the present-day misunderstandings. Everything must be brought out into the open.

"It will not be easy, of course, to keep all the people of God up to date on the results of the theological and doctrinal dialogue. Even if the work is conducted in an atmosphere of spiritual sharing, the findings of a mixed commission are, in the end result, in the form of a theological document. How then we can encourage greater participation by all the faithful? It will be, above all, by living together and praying together.

"At the center of all ecumenical dialogue," he concluded, "there is the question of the nature of the Church. And here all of us, Catholics and Orthodox alike, completely agree on the sacramental nature of the Church. Therefore, if we can overcome our cultural differences and our different ways of expressing ourselves, and find a basic unity, we will become, and we must become a witness which is essential to the unity of the entire Christian world.

"It has been said that the separation between the Church of the East and that of the West was more or less the immediate cause of the schisms in the sixteenth century in Europe. I believe this to be true. We can therefore overcome the divergencies now existing in the Western world only if we restore the catholicity of the Christian tradition or — to use an image Pope John Paul II likes so much — we must learn again to 'breathe with both lungs' which are so vital to the Church as a whole. Impossible? To all those who think so I wish to reply — it is not impossible because it is necessary. This is the will of Christ for his Church."

The ecumenical service, held after the visit to the Catocombs of Domitilla was, together with the recital of matins and vespers, one of the most impressive moments of the convention — an expression of the common, intense prayer for unity.

4) "Decree on Ecumenism — Unitatis Redintegratio," Documents of the Vatican, Walter M. Abbott, ed. p. 35.

5) This document was released in Rome, July 7, 1975, by the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity.

6) Apostolic Exhortation, Catechesis in Our Day, Oct. 16, 1972, no. 2. "The Pope Speaks," vol. 25, 1980, p. 57.

7) Address of John Paul II, Nov. 30, 1979, St. George's Cathedral, Phanar, Istanbul. "The Pope Speaks." Vol. 25, 1980, p. 26.

ARCHBISHOP GIULIANO AGRESTI

"Substantially, we are already in unity"

During their visit to the small city of Loppiano, the convention members had a very lively visit with Archbishop Giuliano Agresti, President of the Italian Bishops' Commission for Ecumenism.

"Whatever be our confession of faith," he pointed out, "we make up *one* 'symphony.' Our spirits travel the same road towards the Epiphany of God's countenance. It is extremely easy for me to be ecumenical, and to love every brother who confesses Jesus, because I see everywhere this procession of people seeking the epiphany of God's countenance.

" . . . . We are, all of us, in the Holy Spirit. There is only one word, the word of God, which makes us gather together. Even though not perfectly, we are already in the substance of unity.

"I think that if we want to be ecumenical, we must love the others, embracing all their splendor, their richness, and their originality, the uniqueness they bring with them. This reminds me of an episode that happened once on a trip to Africa. The arrival of a bishop was a rather exceptional event in those days, and so all came to welcome me, Christians and non-Christians alike. But I was wondering whether all this show of affection wasn't due, more than anything else, to my bright red robe, my miter, and my pastoral staff. So, after the celebration of the Eucharist, towards the end of the festivities, I walked over to the three native drums, the same ones which had awakened me that morning. I don't know who gave me the courage (I rather think it was the Holy Spirit who makes us love even to the point of playing the clown if necessary). The fact is that right then and there, just the way I was, dressed in my bishop's robes, I sat down and beat the drums for about twenty minutes. When I finished, I heard a scream that seemed never to end. I think there were about five thousand Africans gathered there. I learned later from the local bishop that the following day all the people were commenting, 'The Bishop beat our drums! he became part of our civilization.' I still have the pictures of that, no doubt, extraordinary event. But why did I mention it? Because if we want God to reunite our culture, our way of life, and our faith, so that while the Spirit is working to bring us to a perfect union, the world may already begin to see the signs of this union."

THE POPE'S GREETING

The afternoon of May 6, 1981, in St. Peter's Square, during the General Audience, the Holy Father gave the ecumenical group a warm welcome.

"I address a special greeting," he said, "to His Eminence the Metropolitan of Tranoupolis, Mons. Damaskinos, who represents the Ecumenical Patriarchate, as well as to the Orthodox faithful who have come with him to Mariapoli, in order to meet the focolarini and meditate together on their common effort to be witnesses to the Gospel in their own surroundings.

"May such meetings help to overcome what separates us! I hope that they will increase and that they will contribute to weaving closer and closer bonds of love, reciprocal respect, mutual esteem and understanding among Christians, who have been baptized in the death and resurrection of Christ and who live by the same Spirit.

"You are welcome here, and I say to you from the bottom of my heart the great acclamation of Christian faith:

"Christ is risen!

"Christos anesti!"

Walking along the *transenna* (the railing), Pope John Paul exchanged a few words with many of the guests in their own native language. It was a solemn and meaningful moment, accentuated by the applause of the crowd, when, prior to taking his leave, the Pope called Metropolitan Damaskinos, and Bishops Bimen and Gennadios (from right to left in the photograph) to his side on the stand and, together with them and with the other Catholic Bishops present, gave his final benediction.

(English text from L'OSSERVATORE ROMANO, May 11, 1981, p.11.)

WORD OF LIFE

AUGUST

**"Courage!
It is I!
Do not be afraid!"**

(Mt. 14:27)

The word makes us live.

The word makes us free.

The word guarantees happiness.

The word converts.

The word purifies us.

The word draws us to our specific vocations.

The word brings forth the hatred of the world and the sanctity of the disciple.

The word makes us see the truth.

The word brings comfort.

The word gives us joy.

The word produces works.

The word gives wisdom.

The word preserves us from human concerns.

The word obtains everything.

The word brings about union with God.

The word gives us hope of eternal life.

The word makes us one.

The word changes one's mentality.

The word makes each soul a heaven.

"Courage! It is I! Do not be afraid" (Mt. 14:27).

The wonderful episode in which Jesus spoke these words is well known.

After having multiplied the bread and fed the crowd, he had told his apostles to get into the boat and to go on ahead of him to the other side of the lake, while he withdrew to the mountain to pray.

As the boat struggled against the wind and was being tossed about by the waves, Jesus came toward the twelve, walking on the water. Upon seeing him, the apostles were terrified and cried out, "It is a ghost!" Jesus, however, reassured them by saying:
"Courage! It is I! Do not be afraid."

At these words, Peter said, "Lord, if it is really you, order me to come out to you on the water." "Come," Jesus replied.

Confidently, Peter started walking toward Jesus. Then, suddenly he became frightened because of the high winds and he began to sink. He cried out, "Save me, Lord!" Jesus reached out, grabbed hold of him and said, "Man of little faith, why did you doubt?"

When they stepped into the boat the wind ceased. The disciples fell at Jesus' feet and said, "Truly you are the son of God."
"Courage! It is I! Do not be afraid."

Biblical scholars think that in recounting this episode the evangelist was not satisfied with simply relating a series of events, but rather presented them in a way that would have a direct bearing on the life of the first Christian community. For him, then, the boat floundering in the waves, would represent the Church, and the story reflect the situation in which the members of the first Christian community found themselves after Jesus had ascended to heaven. Since Jesus was no longer visibly present and seemed far away from them, they felt abandoned and alone amidst the storm and in the "night" of this trial. Jesus' words would therefore also be meant for those dark hours which the early Christian community experienced.
"Courage! It is I! Do not be afraid."

Christians, however, can experience such dark moments not only as a community, but also as individuals. You too, like any other Christian, may have experienced serious doubts of faith. You may have seen everything you believe in begin to waver.

Even the saints have undergone trials of this kind. Therese of Lisieux is a case in point, for the materialism which in her time had already begun to make its negative influence felt, tried to influence even her as she lay dying.

Such moments are terrible! Maybe you too have experienced them, and have felt alone in the face of great difficulty. Perhaps you thought you would have to struggle unassisted against the wind.

However, just when everything that surrounds you is leading you to believe that Jesus is absent, far away and non-existent, he often manifests himself unexpectedly amidst the difficulties, just as he did with the disciples.

Jesus foresaw these moments of darkness and of light, and before

his death said, "You are now sad, but I will see you again, and your hearts will be filled with gladness" (Jn. 16:22).

"Courage! It is I! Do not be afraid."

Jesus walking on the water is clearly the Sovereign of all creation and Lord over life and death.

Seeing him manifest himself in this way, however, might trouble you. Even the disciples said, "It is a ghost!" The initial reaction to divine manifestations is always one of fear. It is even said that by the very fear it arouses, a divine event can be distinguished from an event of preternatural or diabolical nature.

But just as Jesus' presence, which initially frightened Peter, afterward inspired him with such trust, that he was not afraid to walk on the water to reach Jesus, so it must be with you. In the midst of whatever storm you encounter, you can be certain that Jesus is saying to you:

"Courage! It is I! Do not be afraid."

Jesus wants the entire Church and each individual Christian to take courage in their moment of trial and not to succumb. He wants them to have complete trust in him, notwithstanding appearances. He wants Christians to live in such a way that he may always be present among them, and he indicated how to do this when he said, "Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in their midst" (Mt. 18:20). For when he is present, danger goes away. Indeed, as soon as Jesus and Peter stepped into the boat, "the wind died down."

So let us strive to live this life of ours intent upon doing everything in such a way as to insure Jesus' continued presence among us. To be united in his name means to be united in him, in the reality that he brings with him, in his will that is above all: "Love one another as I have loved you" (Jn.15:12).

If we do this, if we are ready to love one another as he has loved us, he will be in our midst. And what better companion could we have in this life which is opening onto eternity?

CHIARA LUBICH

SEPTEMBER

"If two of you join your voices on earth to pray for anything whatever, it shall be granted you by my Father in Heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in their midst." (Mt. 18:19-20)

"If two of you join your voices on earth to pray for anything whatever, it shall be granted you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in their midst" (Mt. 18: 19-20).

It seems to me this is one of those expressions of Jesus which most fill our hearts with joy. Indeed, how many needs there are in life that we do not know how to fulfill, and how many good and legitimate desires there are that we cannot satisfy! You may be firmly convinced that only a direct intervention from on high, a grace from heaven, could grant you whatever you are longing for with all your heart. And here are Jesus' words so full of hope and promise and spoken with such clarity that they leave no room for doubt:

"If two of you join your voices on earth to pray for anything whatever, it shall be granted you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in their midst."

You have probably noticed that in the Gospels Jesus frequently urges us to pray, and he also teaches us how to obtain what we ask for. But the prayer we are considering here is truly unique, because in order for it to be answered, it must be offered by at least two persons — that is by a community. Jesus says: "If two of you. . . ." Two is the smallest number which can constitute a community. What matters to Jesus is not so much the number of those praying, but the fact that they are together.

In the Judaic tradition, as you may be aware, it was well known that God does not ignore prayer offered together, but here Jesus is speaking of something else. He says in fact, "If two of you join your voices . . . ." He wants at least two persons, but, more importantly, he wants them united. He puts the emphasis on their being of one accord, on their unanimity; he wants them to be of one voice.

This means, of course, that they must agree on what to ask; but most of all, it means that their request must be based on the fact that their hearts are of one accord. In effect, Jesus is affirming that the practice of mutual love is the prerequisite for obtaining what we ask for in prayer.

"If two of you join your voices on earth to pray for anything whatever, it shall be granted you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in their midst."

You might wonder why prayers offered in unity are more pleasing to the Father.

The reason is that such prayers have been purified. For isn't it true that our individual prayers are often reduced to little more than a series of selfish requests that remind us of beggars addressing a king rather than of children speaking to their father?

On the other hand, what we ask together is certainly less tainted with personal interests, for when we are with others we are more inclined to be open to their needs and to share their concerns.

Moreover, two or three persons striving to be of one accord are much more likely to have a better understanding of what to ask of the Father.

Therefore, if we want our prayer to be answered, it is best to follow exactly what Jesus says.

"If two of you join your voices on earth to pray for anything whatever, it shall be granted you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in their midst."

Jesus himself tells us the secret for the success of this prayer. It is contained in the words, "gathered in my name." When we are united in this way, he is present among us, and whatever we ask together with him we are much more likely receive. For it is Jesus himself — who is present wherever mutual

love unites people's hearts — who with us asks the Father for the grace we are requesting. How could the Father possibly not listen to Jesus? The Father and Christ are one.

Isn't this magnificent? Doesn't it inspire you with trust and confidence?

"If two of you join your voices on earth to pray for anything whatever, it shall be granted you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in their midst."

At this point you are probably interested in knowing what Jesus wants you to pray for.

He himself makes it very clear, "anything whatever." He sets no limits.

From now on, then, why not make this type of prayer a part of your everyday life. Perhaps you, your family, your friends, the organizations to which you belong, your country and the world around you are all lacking many things simple because you have never asked for them.

Get together with the members of your family, with those who understand your ideas or share your ideals. Declare your readiness to love one another as the Gospel commands, so that you will be united in such a way as to merit the presence of Jesus among you — then ask. Ask as much as you can. Ask during the liturgy. Ask in church. Ask anywhere. Ask before making a decision. Ask anything. whatever.

Above all, do not act in such a way as to disappoint Jesus with your indifference, after he has given you such an opportunity.

Lives supported by prayers of this kind are bound to make of the world a much happier place, where people will smile more, the sick will have hope, children will be more protected as they are growing up, families will live in greater harmony, and today's most difficult problems will be dealt with successfully in the intimacy of each home . . . . And the ultimate reward will be heaven, because praying for the needs of the living and the dead is also one of the works of mercy, on the basis of which we will be judged at the end of our lives.

CHIARA LUBICH

NEW! NEW! NEW! NEW! NEW! NEW! NEW! NEW! NEW!

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EXPERIENCES

GOING TO NIGHT SCHOOL

Shortly before the birth of our son, I had decided — after discussing it with my wife and praying for the grace to see the right way — to go back to the university in the evening to pursue another degree. We knew with the baby coming and with the usual heavy homework of an English teacher that I would have a very full schedule; but we felt that this was the right decision.

In the past three months, many small experiences have occurred as we have tried to live the will of God in these circumstances. One evening in January, my wife had gone out for a couple of hours. I had papers to grade, and several articles to read. Then Joseph, who was then two months old, began to cry. I got up from my desk and went to him, angry at having to interrupt my work. I picked him up and began to walk, hoping that he would fall asleep so I could get back to my studies. As I paced the hallway between my room and his, the word of life for that month, "The members are many, but the body is one," came to me. I realized right away that little Joseph was not only my son, but was also a member of Christ's body. The will of God for me in that moment was to care for him. The rest of the work, important though it was, was the good that God didn't want me to do in that moment.

T. M.

Focolare posters

A new color poster (15" x 18") is now available at all the Focolare Centers. The other four posters (also 15" x 18") can still be obtained as well. All can be ordered by mail from:
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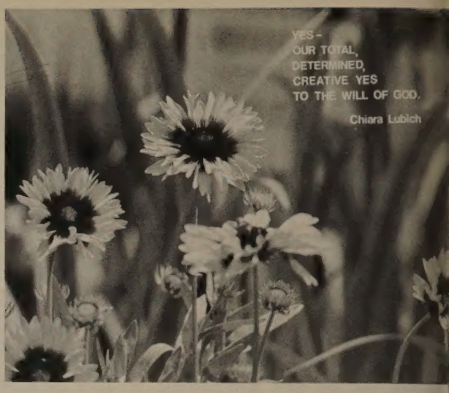
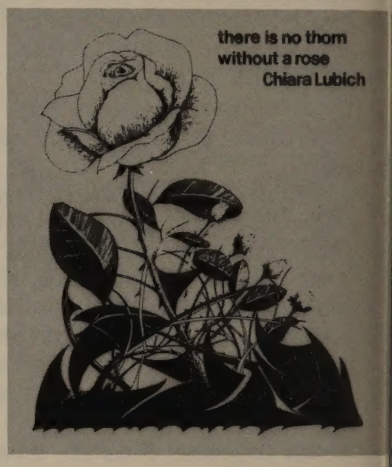


FMPcl4

When unity becomes difficult
let us not break, but bend...
until love works the miracle
of one heart and one mind.
Chiara Lubich

FMPcl2



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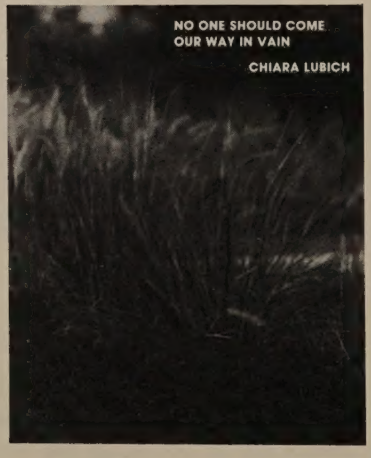

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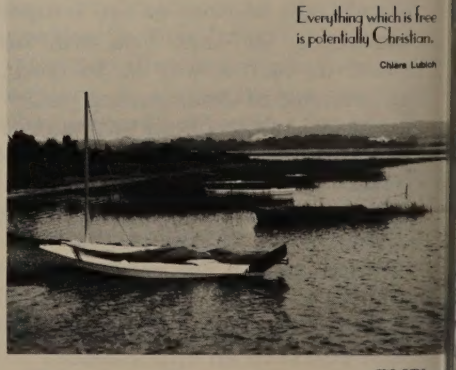

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What is the Focolare Movement?

THE BEGINNINGS

The Focolare Movement began in 1943, in Italy. Chiara Lubich, with a small group of girls, realized in the midst of the total destruction of World War II, that God is the only one worth living for. Hence they began to place the Gospel in the center of their lives. The testament of Jesus became their Ideal: "That all may be one . . . that the world may know that you have sent me, and that you have loved them as you have loved me . . . " (Jn.17: 23). The life lived by these first girls, the spiritual way they spontaneously followed, gave rise to a form of spirituality proper to the Focolare Movement. It represents a powerful means of introducing the Gospel into modern life.

WHO ARE THE FOCOLARINI

The name "Focolarini" takes its origin from the Italian word "fire" and suggests the idea of "carriers of fire."

Single men and women live in separate communities called Focolare Centers. Their principal aim is to achieve unity among themselves through mutual charity practiced twenty-four hours a day. They follow the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity, and obedience. They work as other lay men and women in regular jobs and professions.

Some married persons, even though continuing to live in their families, participate fully in the life of either the men's or women's Focolare Centers in their common effort to achieve this same unity. They are called "Married Focolarini."

THE VOLUNTEERS

The Volunteers, who are also called the "Volunteers of God," would like to transform all human realities according to the Gospel spirit. For this reason they remain in their jobs and in their professions in order to vivify them with this spirit.

Their aim is to help form a society made of men and women who are made "new" by the Gospel message and who can then bring new life to all fields of human activity (education, business, etc.). This results in new social relationships which, in turn, lead to the realization of new structures of society.

THE LARGEST MEMBERSHIP

The largest membership of the Movement is made up of men, women, and young people of all social conditions who are free of any formal ties with it. Their bond of unity stems from their free and willing acceptance of its spirit. They keep in touch with the Movement and with one another through large or small gatherings, publications, correspondence, and personal contact.

People with other commitments, even those bound to religious institutions, can form part of the Movement too because the Movement exists wherever its spirit is lived. People of non-Christian religions are also counted among the Movement's friends. Also those who owe no allegiance to any faith are often attracted by one or another of the Movement's aspects.

GEN

The new generations of the Focolare Movement form another Movement or, better, three movements: the Gen 2, the Gen 3 and the Gen 4 Movements, divided according to their various age groups. "Gen" stands for new generation.

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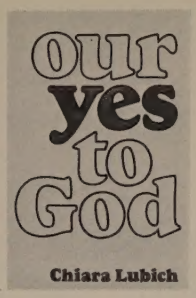

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First she puts this fundamental intuition to the test of Scripture. She then moves on to the experiences of some of the great saints, and draws upon the teachings of the Church Fathers, the Second Vatican Council, and the recent popes.

This book is stimulating and practical. It shows that doing God's will involves much more than mere passivity or resignation. Moreover, throughout the book, Chiara Lubich points out that doing God's will is the way to true freedom and to our total fulfillment as human beings.

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